

'Burning of holy books not our way'

PM: We strongly condemn and will not tolerate any such acts

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will not tolerate the burning of any holy book of any religion.

"We in Malaysia will not tolerate the burning of any holy book - be it the Quran, Bible or any other," said Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"There is no freedom to kill or dehumanise," said the Prime Minister at the launch of the book *Knowledge, Tradition and Civilisation: Essays in honour of Professor Osman Bakar* at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation-International Islamic University Malaysia (Istac-IIUM) here yesterday.

Last Saturday, Danish-Swedish politician Rasmus Paludan set a

Quran ablaze in front of the Turkiye embassy in Stockholm, Sweden, raising the ire of many nations which condemned the act.

Anwar said Wisma Putra had also called up the Swedish ambassador to convey Malaysia's disgust at the act by Paludan.

"There is so much misunderstanding and prejudice, enmity against religion, and the recent blatant disregard for values and ethics in burning the Quran.

"What do you want to do? Are you secular? Are you against Islam? Or are you against religion? But what you actually portrayed is the degradation of man and your val-



Timely reminder: Anwar (centre) launching the book with the author Prof Osman (second right) at Istac-IIUM in Kuala Lumpur. With them are Mohamed Khaled (second left), HUM president Tan Sri Samsudin Osman (right) and HUM rector Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Dzulkifli Abdul Razak. - AZHAR MAHFOF/The Star

ues," said Anwar.

He said that in a multi-racial and multi-religious country like Malaysia, civilisational discourse was needed to promote a better understanding between races and religions.

Anwar also called upon Malaysians to be wary of those who try to create disunity by abusing the name of Islam.

"While we are trying, to educate the masses, we have a few (among us) who have the tendency to instigate in the name of Islam and attempt to provoke and cause discord.

"I appeal to the masses to protest and express their disgust, but we must give our understanding and do our utmost to ensure the message of the Quran is alive within us," he said.

After the event, Anwar said that while the government had acted even before the Islamist party PAS condemned the burning of the Quran, PAS was free to hold protests against the burning of the Quran.

"They have a right to do that. There is no issue to express their views. If PAS wants to do it, it can do so.

"But we, as a government, have done our part. We called the ambassador and made it very clear; our statement was very strong.

"They (PAS) came later, but we have nothing against them expressing their views.

"If they have such initiatives, we support them but do not create chaos in the country," said Anwar.

PAS has planned a protest march from KLCC to the Swedish embassy in Kuala Lumpur after Friday prayers today.